



Montgomery County Council

*From the Office of Councilmembers Tom Perez,
Marilyn Praisner, and Howard Denis*

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COUNCIL JOINED BY DUNCAN IN PUSHING FORWARD ON DRUG DISCOUNT CARD FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

Councilmembers Tom Perez, Marilyn Praisner, and Howard Denis today hailed the signing of a contract on a Council initiative to promote affordable prescription drugs for County residents – a prescription drug discount card that could save 15 percent to 30 percent off the full price of U.S. medicines.

The discount drug card idea originated with the Council's interagency task force on prescription drugs, which included it in its April report. The program was introduced in the Council in July with the support of a majority of Councilmembers.

County Executive Doug Duncan added his support today and joined Councilmembers to announce the signing of a contract with Advance/PCS, a division of CaremarkRx of Nashville, Tennessee.

The cards would cost the County and individual residents nothing and no significant expenses would be needed to implement the program. The National Association of Counties has initiated a pilot program to distribute discount drug cards. Counties in New Jersey, New York, Michigan, and Pennsylvania have already initiated similar programs.

"Access to affordable health care is the Number One consumer issue in America," said Councilmember Tom Perez. "The drug card is one step – but add it to buying prescription drugs from Canada, bolstering our non-profit clinics, and establishing a 'Community Pharmacy' and you have the makings of a concerted campaign to make sure no family in our County is left without the health care and prescription drugs they need."

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“When it comes to helping residents afford prescription drugs, every little bit helps,” said Councilmember Perez. “This discount card can be especially helpful for those with no health insurance or those with a poor prescription drug benefit. Right now, they are paying ‘full boat.’”

“I’m happy that the County Executive is supporting the County Council discount drug card initiative to help County residents with prescription drug costs,” said Councilmember Marilyn Praisner. “It’s also important that we are tying into ongoing efforts in this area by the National Association of Counties. This program, coupled with the voluntary Canadian drug initiative the Council will approve tomorrow, will go a considerable way toward addressing the escalating costs of prescription drugs in this country.”

All three Councilmembers discounted the County Executive’s announcement that he is sending a letter to the state of Maryland urging them to request a waiver from the federal Food and Drug Administration to import prescription drugs from Canada.

“It’s clear that the FDA has said ‘no’ to any waivers,” said Councilmember Howard Denis. “We don’t have to ask permission. We should just move ahead and approve this voluntary program to allow County employees and retirees the choice to buy safe, high-quality maintenance drugs from Canada.”

“Leadership is not about hiding behind contested legal opinions or passing the buck to somebody else,” said Councilmember Perez. “Leadership is about moving ahead.”

“We have been in constant contact with the federal Food and Drug Administration over the past nine months. They have consistently said they are not giving out waivers. Just to doublecheck, I called FDA Commissioner William Hubbard on Friday. He said ‘no waivers’ – no ‘ifs, ands or buts.’

“Just last week, Springfield mayor Michael Albano paid us a visit. Springfield has had a program such as the one we’ll implement in place for over a year. Guess what? No safety problems. No legal problems either. Over half of their employees and retirees are participating in the program -- with cost savings of over \$6 million projected for this year. Montgomery taxpayers could save \$15-20 million.”

The Council will take final action on the legislation to establish a Canadian drugs program tomorrow at 11 AM. Five of nine Councilmembers are co-sponsors of the measure.

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